NATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

on

HERITAGE, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

COMMITTEE REPORT

July, 1989

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BACKGROUND

In the 1987 Throne Speech, the Honourable William Vander Zalm announced a commitment to establish a Native Heritage Centre in co-operation with the Native community and the private sector to reflect and preserve the culture and language of the First Peoples of this Province.

The Native Heritage, Language and Culture Advisory Committee was established in September, 1988, to make recommendations to the Provincial Government concerning this commitment.

This Advisory Committee, chaired by Mr. Cliff Serwa, Parliamentary Secretary, has twelve members. These include five Native Elders, four Native professionals, and two private sector representatives:

Dr. Thelma Sharp Cook
Chief Tom Greene
Chief Alfred Joseph
Chief Clarence T. (Manny) Jules
Dr. George Louie
Chief Joe Michell
Mr. Mac Norris
Mr. Percy Paull
Ms. Sophie Pierre
Ms. Mary Thomas
Ms. Gloria Cranmer Webster

MANDATE AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Advisory Committee's mandate is to make recommendations to the Provincial Government concerning the most effective means of implementing this initiative.

Its terms of reference include making recommendations in six categories. Each of these categories, as outlined below, is addressed in this report:

(1) the number of centres required,
(2) the mandate of the centre(s),
(3) the operation of the centre(s),
(4) estimated capital and operating costs,
(5) inter-relationships regarding Native education, First Nations' School Boards, cultural and language institutions, training institutions and public museums, and

(6) related issues deemed appropriate by the Committee.

The Committee views its mandate as a positive step toward the urgent need to support traditional Native culture in British Columbia. Its members wish to stress, however, that they do not view this initiative as a substitute for the need to address Native culture, heritage and language as part of the Native land claim issue.

PURPOSE AND GOALS

The Advisory Committee has determined that, to accurately reflect the goals of British Columbia's First Citizens, heritage, culture and language must be viewed from the broadest perspective possible and as entirely inseparable. Language is the soul of any culture and the primary means by which culture is accumulated, shared, and passed on from generation to generation.

Although the Advisory Committee does not presume to speak for all Native peoples in the Province, it feels confident in stating that the major and ongoing loss of Native languages has profound implications for all First Citizens and their sense of wholeness, heritage and community. This loss is shared by British Columbians as a whole.

The crucial role played by culture in the demise or recovery and stabilization of individuals and communities has been demonstrated throughout time and is indisputable. Return to culture for Native people brings with it feelings of self-worth derived from a knowledge of the strengths and virtues of Canada's First Peoples.

While heritage, language and culture are inseparable, language provides the most tangible means of addressing the whole. Native languages in Canada fall into eleven language families. Of these, the following seven are unique to British Columbia - the Haida, Kotenai, Salishan, Tlingit, Wakashan, Athabascan and Tsimshian. Some of these languages, through intermarriage and population movement, have spread to the Yukon, Alberta and the United States. These seven language families encompass approximately thirty languages all of which require immediate and substantial support for their survival as they are perilously close to extinction.

The Committee sees this initiative as a means of preserving and upholding Native culture. It also perceives it as an opportunity to encourage significant changes in the way British Columbia's First Citizens are viewed by non-Natives. This project holds in store benefits for all British Columbians.

The Committee's desired goals for this initiative, therefore, are:

- to preserve and enhance Native language culture and values,
- to increase understanding and sharing of knowledge, both within the Native and the non-Native community, and
- to heighten appreciation and acceptance of the wealth of cultural diversity among all British Columbians.

ACTIVITIES

The Committee has met frequently to discuss the full range of issues within its terms of reference. Recognizing the tremendous diversity of Native cultures throughout the Province, it has taken every opportunity to visit various locations, including the K'san Native Cultural Centre near Hazelton, the Secwepemc Cultural Centre in Kamloops, the U'mista Centre in Alert Bay, and the Woodland Cultural Centre in Ontario.

The Committee has also recognized and attempted to create a balance between the following issues:

- equitable access to this initiative throughout the Province,
- representation by all seven major linguistic groups,
- use of existing resources, and
- identification of key target groups.

The Committee has also attempted to fully explore the concepts of 'culture', 'heritage' and 'language'. It has worked with each of these concepts to design a model which recognizes the full scope of Native culture and carries forward each of these three aspects for use by future generations, both Native and non-Native.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Committee has adopted the following as guiding principles for this initiative:

- Native culture, heritage and language must be viewed as broadly as possible to meet the goal of perpetuating, revitalizing and protecting all aspects of Native culture in British Columbia.

- Any and all centres recognized under this initiative must be Native owned and operated.

- Ongoing core funding for operating costs, commensurate with high quality programs, must be available.

- Any and all centres must serve three target groups, in the following order of priority:

    - local Native people,
    - local non-Natives, and
    - the general public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Advisory Committee has made recommendations within its terms of reference as follows:

1. **As part of this cultural initiative, funds must be provided on an urgent basis to ensure the survival of British Columbia's aboriginal lanaguages, as many are perilously close to extinction.**

A major program to salvage "at risk" languages in British Columbia is needed immediately. Criteria for such a program should be developed in consultation with the "Native Heritage Centres Board" proposed in Recommendation 4 below.

2. **This Native Cultural initiative should have its own enabling legislation, developed through broad based consultation with the Native community, designed to perpetuate, revitalize, encourage growth and protect all aspects of Native culture.**

Such legislation is required to provide formal recognition, continuity and long term support for this initiative.

3. **There should be a minimum of 27 Native Cultural Centres established throughout the Province.**

Several centres are required to adequately and fairly reflect the cultural diversity of Native peoples within British Columbia. It is the Committee's view that 27 Native Cultural Centres will be required to do justice to the purpose and intent of this initiative.

4. **A permanent "Native Heritage Centres Board" should be established under enabling legislation to oversee the implementation of these centres and highlight and bring focus to the work of the centres throughout the Province.**

A minimum of 10 of the 12 members of this Board should be Native. The members should be appointed by the Minister responsible for Native Affairs through broad based consultation with Native groups. They must reflect the broad range of Native groups throughout the Province. This Native Heritage Centres Board should be responsible for establishing high standards of excellence and funding criteria for all centres, as well as developing the mandate for an administrative body. The Board should also be responsible for developing the guidelines for an administrative body as outlined in Recommendation 5 below.

5. A central administrative body should be established to coordinate the activities of these 27 Native Cultural Centres.

The mandate of this central body will be purely administrative as opposed to direction setting. The functions performed by this body will include:

- o finance and administration, including the preparation of funding proposals, and
- o general co-ordination including public relations activities.

6. The mandate of the centres should be to address culture, language and heritage to the fullest extent possible.

At minimum, the following services should be within the scope of these centres:

- o research in aboriginal languages,
- o the development of Native language curriculum and materials,
- o preservation of key ceremonial objects,
- o promotion of quality arts and crafts development,
- o preservation and promotion of Native history and traditional values through educational material,
- o special projects and cultural events designed to promote public understanding and appreciation of Native culture, and
- o visual displays of items of cultural significance to Native people.

7. Each Cultural Centre should be operated at the community level.

Local Bands and Tribal Councils within the communities concerned should be responsible for establishing independent non-profit Native organizations responsible for managing these centres. Without this incorporated community control, the centres will lack the sense of ownership and community pride required to make this initiative a success.

8. Wherever possible, existing Native owned and operated centres and existing buildings such as residential schools should be used. Capital funding must be made available to upgrade existing structures as required to develop new centres wherever the need is identified and none exist.

This initiative should be viewed as a means to build on existing Native cultural initiatives. Costly duplications and new initiatives which supplant existing centres and programs must be avoided. Existing structures should be renovated as cultural centres where practical. Residential schools through which Native culture was repressed in the past, for example, offer an excellent opportunity to demonstrate government's support for this positive cultural initiative.

9. A commitment for significant capital and ongoing operating funds, comparable to existing provincial cultural institutions, should be made by the Province of British Columbia to enable the Centres to achieve a high standard of excellence. Supplementary funding should come from the Federal Government, private corporations, foundations, and Native organizations.

The Committee views a broad and diverse funding base as critical to the success of this initiative to ensure that financial support is stable, ongoing and independent of the vagaries of a single funding source.

The Committee is of the opinion that, without a firm commitment to ongoing operating funds, Centre staff will be preoccupied with fund raising to the extent that the time necessary to maintain innovative, high quality services and programs will be unavailable.

10. The future of this cultural initiative should be safeguarded through the creation of a perpetual endowment fund.

A perpetual endowment will provide this initiative with the ability to develop specific and special cultural projects and events. This fund will provide a stable financial base and offer the private sector an attractive, province-wide vehicle through which it may participate.

11. Under the stewardship of the Board, the Province and the Federal Government should initiate tax incentives for private donors to encourage corporate participation.

Tax incentives, which will require review on an ongoing basis, represent a valuable means by which corporate participation in this initiative may be encouraged.

12. The Ministry of Native Affairs should be charged with proactively integrating this initiative with Native participants, key provincial ministries, inter-ministry committees, central agencies, local municipalities, regional governments, and educational institutions.

This initiative has significant potential to foster and promote a greater understanding and awareness of Native culture, language and heritage if integrated with existing Provincial Government programs. For example, oral and written history should be proactively integrated with education curriculum development throughout the Province. The feasibility and merits of establishing one or more fully funded Chairs on Native Culture at one of the Province's universities should be fully explored. The Ministry of Finance and Treasury Board should be consulted regarding tax incentives to encourage corporate donations. The Ministries of Education and Advanced Education and Job Training should be consulted regarding accreditation and appropriate salaries for Native language and culture instructors.

13. Ultimate ownership and stewardship of Native ceremonial objects and artifacts, as identified in the Project Pride Task Force Report, must be resolved.

Legislative amendments to the Heritage Conservation Act and the ultimate ownership and stewardship of ceremonial objects and archaeological artifacts must be resolved.
This longstanding issue, as well as other Native specific issues raised by Project Pride, represents an integral aspect of this Heritage Centre initiative.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The Advisory Committee suggests that a Native Heritage Centres Board (Recommendation 4), be established immediately to implement this Advisory Committee's recommendations should this Report be approved.

In the interests of continuity, it is further suggested that some of the members of the Native Heritage, Language and Culture Advisory Committee be selected as members of this Native Heritage Centres Board.

BENEFITS

The potential benefits associated with this initiative are considerable in terms of its profound implications for cultural heritage and economic development.

The cultural benefits, which will accrue to Native and non-Native British Columbians alike, include a better understanding and celebration of the differences between native and non-native cultures. This has obvious implications for improved relations between the Native community and the larger community in all aspects of daily life in British Columbia.

Cultural events, educational material and a limitless range of related activities all built on the commitment to preserve and enhance traditional Native culture and its values will enrich this Province. They will also provide an opportunity for it to excel Canada-wide and internationally.

Economic spinoffs associated with tourism in particular offer an exciting challenge for all British Columbians. Tourism, which generated 3.5 billion dollars for British Columbia's economy in 1988, is the Province's second largest industry. The creation of Native culture, language and heritage centres will do much to enhance British Columbia's reputation as a first class tourist destination. Tour packages for these centres, coordinated through the central administrative body, could capitalize on the broader Canadian and international travel market, where there is a proven interest in Native culture.

SUMMARY

The Committee members unanimously agree that the British Columbia Government's commitment to establish a means of preserving and upholding Native culture is both timely and deeply meaningful.

The Committee members are also unanimous in the view that resolution of the underlying issues of aboriginal land claims and the constitutional entrenchment of Indian peoples' rights is paramount in the preservation of Indian culture.

The Committee welcomes this initiative as an opportunity for Native people to preserve and demonstrate cultural values and traditions and thereby continue to participate with pride and dignity within Native communities and the larger society.

The Advisory Committee is confident that implementation of its recommendations will lead to a meaningful, well-designed initiative of which all British Columbians can be proud.